

more than \$5 trillion—\$5,102,708,479,478.04 (Five trillion, one hundred two billion, seven hundred eight million, four hundred seventy-nine thousand, four hundred seventy-eight dollars and four cents) during the past 25 years.●

12th ANNUAL ENTREPRENEURIAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

● Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to offer my congratulations to the Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) as it celebrates the 12th Annual Entrepreneurial Women's Conference. The event, which is to be held on September 9, 1998, at Chicago's Navy Pier, will celebrate the Women's Business Development Center's second decade of outstanding service to women in the business community.

The Women's Business Development Center is a Chicago-based nonprofit women's business assistance center devoted to providing services and programs that support and accelerate the growing role of women business owners in the economy. Since its founding in 1986 by Carol Dougal and Hedy Ratner, the Women's Business Development Center has facilitated more than \$20 million in women's business loans and has assisted women-owned businesses in gaining over \$90 million of government and private contracts. More than 30,000 women business owners have benefited from the following programs and services: counseling, workshops, entrepreneurial training, the Women's Business and Finance Programs, the Women's Business Enterprise Initiative, the Entrepreneurial Woman's Conference and the Women's Business and Buyers Mart.

The success of the Women's Business Development Center has inspired similar initiatives across the country. Women's business development programs modeled after the Center have been launched by economic development organizations in Indiana, Ohio, Florida, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. The tremendous inroads made by women in the business community over the past decade is due in no small part to the efforts of these organizations.

Mr. President, there are now more than 7.7 million women-owned businesses in the United States, and 250,000 of these businesses are located in my homestate of Illinois. Nationally, women's businesses generate \$2.3 trillion of sales and employ one out of every four U.S. company workers.

Given the importance of women-owned businesses to the economy, I look forward to hearing about the continued successes of the Women's Business Development Center in the years to come. Once again let me offer my congratulations to the Women's Business Development Center on their 12th anniversary.●

5TH ANNUAL CROATIAN FESTIVAL

● Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the 5th Annual Croatian Festival that took place August 29–30, 1998 at St. Lucy Croatian Catholic Church in Troy. The Croatian Festival is a very important event for the Croatian community of Michigan, in that it showcases the beautiful Croatian culture and heritage and unites the 20 various Croatian organizations in the state who have come together to organize the Festival. Over the past few years, the Festival has proven to be a very exciting time with exhibits focusing on different regions of Croatia, a variety of Croatian foods, games and traditional Croatian music.

In addition to serving as a celebration of the Croatian culture, the Festival serves the very important purpose of raising funds to assist and reduce the debt of St. Lucy Croatian Catholic church. I wish St. Lucy success as they strive for this goal. I also want to extend my best wishes to the entire Croatian community of Michigan.●

GEMOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF AMERICA AND GEM LABORATORY

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I rise today to commend the exemplary work of the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) and the GIA Gem Laboratory.

GIA has been the nation's leader in gemology training and education since 1931, conducting valuable research and establishing standards upon which purchasers of gems in the United States and abroad have come to rely.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), in establishing regulations concerning gems that are the subject of trade in the United States, adopted standards developed by GIA.

GIA's Gem Laboratory—located in New York City and Carlsbad, California—operates to protect the public from misrepresentation of gems, to assist in the recovery of stolen property, and to provide information useful in the prosecution of criminals involved in gem fraud or theft.

The Gem Laboratory is also the main body applying the FTC's regulations on gems (26 CFR Part 23), such that consumers have a means of determining whether the products they purchase are, in fact, the real thing. It serves an essential role in identifying gems and in detecting synthetics as well as colored, doctored, or treated gems being marketed as natural and in deterring those who might attempt to profit by misrepresenting their goods to American consumers.

The Laboratory can achieve these purposes only because it is responsible for identifying and/or testing a large proportion of the significant gems purchased by consumers in the United States.

The Laboratory's extensive computerized gem database enables it to identify stolen gems that it had previously tested and inhibits the fencing of sto-

len gems, thereby providing an important deterrent to gem theft.

At the request of the United States Customs Service and pursuant to licensing by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Gem Laboratory also tests for irradiated gems posing a health risk to the American public.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and local law enforcement agencies rely on the Gem Laboratory for assistance in solving crimes involving gems. The Laboratory has been instrumental in solving many such crimes, providing crucial evidence and expert testimony essential to their successful prosecution.

Mr. President, I commend GIA and the GIA Gem Laboratory for their contribution to the protection of the consumer. Through its work, the Gem Laboratory significantly lessens the burdens of the federal government that would otherwise have to be borne by the FTC, the FBI, the Customs Service, and other government agencies.●

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL INVESTIGATION UNIT ON GULF WAR ILLNESSES

● Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, today the Committee on Veterans' Affairs released the final report of its Special Investigation Unit (SIU) on Gulf War Illnesses. The report represents the culmination of the unit's year-long, 20-member staff investigation into issues surrounding the illnesses that have affected many veterans of the 1990–91 Persian Gulf War.

The Gulf War ended over seven years ago, but the aftermath of this military victory will remain with us for years to come. This brief war represented a critical turning point in our concept of modern warfare. For the first time since World War I, we faced the possibility of widespread use of chemical warfare agents. Previously, concerns about the use of "weapons of mass destruction" focused on the threat of nuclear warfare, increasingly possessed by the more developed nations of the world, but still limited in availability. But in the Gulf, we came face-to-face with the threat of the "poor man's atomic weapons"—chemical and biological weapons.

Chemical and biological weapons have been around for a long time. The United States and its allies abandoned the use of chemical weapons many years ago. In April 1997, the United States Senate ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, joining many other nations in the international disarmament of chemical weapons. But for terrorists and rogue nations, chemical and biological weapons remain the weapons of choice, and they are likely to play a significant role in the battlefields of the future. According to Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, just as we faced this threat in the Gulf War, we are likely to face it again.

In hearings before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, military heroes such